

# Ammonite Religion

also known as “Religion of Ammon”

By Craig Tyson, D'Youville

Entry tags: Canaanite Religions, Religious Group, Polytheistic, Ammon, Syro-Palestinian Religion, Levantine Religion

Centered on the region around the modern city of Amman, Jordan, the tribally organized, agropastoralist society of the Ammonites (literally, “the sons of Ammon”) flourished during the Iron Age II (ca. 1000–500 BCE), and especially in the latter half of this period. Like other aspects of its culture, Ammonite religion shares much in common with the other cultures of the ancient Levant (Judah, Israel, Aram, Phoenicia, Philistia, Moab, and Edom). These shared traits include a state god, a variety of other gods and goddesses, a special place for the ancestors, public and private cultic areas, and indicators of adaptations from regional peers and from the major political powers of the day located in Mesopotamia and Egypt. While Ammonite religion shares much with the surrounding cultures, there are also unique features. One distinguishing feature of Ammonite religion is the state/dynastic god Milkom, whose name is probably an epithet for the god 'El, and who appears to be represented in a tradition of stone sculptures that have been found in the vicinity of Amman. Also unique is the probable temple to the moon-god at Rujm al-Kursi, which most likely reflects a local tradition of lunar worship influenced by the iconography of the Mesopotamian moon-god Sîn.



Date Range: 1000 BCE - 500 BCE

Region: Ammon

Region tags: Western Asia, Middle East, Jordan

The Iron Age Kingdom of the Ammonites. In the north and northeast, the boundary follows the Zarqa River. In the southeast, the desert provides a natural boundary. In the south, the boundary is hard to define precisely, but lies somewhere north of Madaba. In the west, the boundary is roughly where the plateau begins descending to the Jordan Valley.

## Status of Participants:

✓ Elite    ✓ Religious Specialists    ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

## Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Chapter 6 of Hübner, Ulrich. 1992. *Die Ammoniter: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion eines transjordanischen Volkes im 1 Jahrtausend v. Chr.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Source 2: Aufrecht, Walter E. 2019. *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions*. 2d ed. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns.
- Source 3: Burnett, Joel S. 2009. "Iron Age Deities in Word, Image, and Name: Correlating Epigraphic, Iconographic, and Onomastic Evidence for the Ammonite God." *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 10:153-164.

Notes: Aufrecht 2019 abbreviated herein as CAI

#### Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/10/3/153/htm>
- Source 1 Description: Tyson, Craig W. 2019. "The Religion of the Ammonites: A Specimen of Levantine Religion from the Iron Age II (ca. 1000–500 BCE)." *Religions* 10 (2019): Article 153. doi:10.3390/rel10030153
- Source 2 URL: <https://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/prepublication.php>
- Source 2 Description: Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East

#### Relevant online primary textual corpora (original languages and/or translations):

- Source 1 URL: <https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/137127/>
- Source 1 Description: Corpus der Siegel-Amulette aus Jordanien: Vom Neolithikum bis zur Perserzeit by Jürg Egger and Othmar Keel (2006). Catalog of seals and sealings from Jordan with descriptions, transliterations and translations of inscriptions.
- Source 2 URL: <https://dornsife.usc.edu/wsrp/>
- Source 2 Description: The West Semitic Research Project (and associated program InscriptiFact) provides access to high-resolution photos of many of the inscriptions from Ammon and elsewhere in the Levant.

Notes: Corpus der Siegel-Amulette aus Jordanien abbreviated herein as CSAJ

## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:

– Yes

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is the cultural contact neutral:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– Yes

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

↳ Are the priests paid by polity:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Presumably there were some priests paid by the royal court.

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It is likely that the king and other elites supported some type of state temple or religious institution, but the evidence is lacking.

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– No

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is religious observance enforced by the polity:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Polity legal code is roughly coterminous with religious code:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Polity provides preferential economic treatment (e.g. tax, exemption)

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Possible given what we know from elsewhere in the ancient Near East.

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– I don't know

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– I don't know

Nature of religious group [please select one]:

– Large religious group (unknown relationship to other religious groups, or presence of other religious groups unknown)

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: In all likelihood there were priests and the king and other elites might have had some ceremonial role.

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Field doesn't know

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes



In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The largest possible monumental religious building is on the Amman Citadel, where the broken remnants of a large building were found under the Temple of Hercules and dating to the 7th to 6th c. BCE. The extant walls are ca. 21 m x 19 m. While the siting and size of the building are suggestive of a temple, the mediocre wall construction and lack of cultic paraphernalia leave the identification of it as a temple somewhat ambiguous. On this structure, see pp. 160-170 in Momani, Ahmed, Anthi Koutsoukou, Glen L. Peterman, Peter Warnock, and Paul-Eugène Dion. 1997. "The 1993 Excavations." In *The Great Temple of Amman: The Excavations*, edited by Anthi Koutsoukou, Kenneth W. Russell, Mohammad Najjar and Ahmed Momani, 157-171. Amman: American Center of Oriental Research.

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Field doesn't know

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It is likely that there is, as indicated by the possible temple on the Amman Citadel mentioned above, and by the likely small temple at Rujm al-Kursi (Hübner, Ulrich. 2009. "Der Mondtempel auf Rugm al-Kursi in der Ammanitis." In *Israel zwischen den Mächten: Festschrift für Stefan Timm zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by M. Pietsch and F. Hartenstein, 145-153. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

– On persons

– At home

– Some public spaces

↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:

– Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not):

– Yes

Notes: Almond shaped eyes are common on the statuary, though not utterly unique to Ammonite iconography.

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic):

– Yes

Notes: Usually in the form of Mischwesen, beings that combine multiple zoomorphic/theriomorphic features or that combine zoomorphic/theriomorphic features with anthropomorphic features. Many of these are of Mesopotamian origin.

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic):

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic):

– Yes

Notes: Represented most significantly by the collection of atef-crowned stone statue heads that most likely represent the state or dynastic deity, usually identified as Milkom and/or El.

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract symbol):

– Yes

Notes: Sun, moon, and stars are common. Local adaptation of the lunar crescent of the Mesopotamian moon-god Sin is likely as seen on the sculpture from Rujm al-Kursi. Mesopotamian religious symbols (Lamp of Nusku, Spade of Marduk, Stylus of Nabu) known from seals that were probably imported to the area. Thus, it is not clear that the local populace knew what these symbols represented.

↳ Portrayals of afterlife:

– No

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Symbols such as those of the sun, moon, and stars, or the atef-crowned sculptures might represent something like doctrine.

↳ Humans:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There are representations of humans in the iconography, but it is not clear that they are specifically religious.

↳ Other features of iconography:

– No

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Notes: The likely temple at Rujm al-Kursi is oriented east-west with its entrance facing the east. This is common for Iron Age temples/sanctuaries. Other likely sacred spaces don't have a clear environmental orientation, though further excavations might clarify this.

Are pilgrimages present:

– Field doesn't know

## Beliefs

### Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: Care for the dead that continued to exist in some disembodied form is implied by the eating and drinking vessels found in tombs.

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– Field doesn't know

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: Continuation of the person after death is implied by eating and drinking vessels in tombs that

suggest care for the dead.

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Some, mostly the wealthier, were buried in communal burial caves.

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

Notes: Fingerrings, fibulae, seals, etc.

↳ Valuable items:

– Yes

↳ Significant wealth (e.g. gold, jade, intensely worked objects):

– Yes

Notes: Rare finds of gold jewelry.

↳ Some wealth (some valuable or useful objects interred):

– Yes

Notes: Metals in the form of rings, mirrors, fibulae, arrowheads, knife blades. Semi-precious stones in the form of seals. Mediterranean shells, occasional glass.

↳ Other valuable/precious items interred:

– Yes [specify]: Occasional finds of high-quality drinking vessels

↳ Other grave goods:

– Yes

Notes: Some figurines, a model shrine, pottery connected to eating and drinking, items



connected to burning incense.

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

Notes: Yassine, Khair. 1984. Tell el Mazar I: Cemetery A. Amman: University of Amman Press.

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– Yes

Notes: A number of cave tombs with multiple burials

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– I don't know

↳ Other formal burial type:

– No

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: El or Milkom. Milkom might be an epithet of El as a royal deity. They might also be separate gods.

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):

– No

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: A number of seals contain names with kinship elements such as "father" that might present El in a kinship relationship. Most of them are non-provenanced. See Tyson 2019: 20 in "Sources" section.

↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:

– Yes [specify]: El and/or Milkom appears to be the dynastic or state god of the Ammonites.

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:

– Yes [specify]: Appears in the iconography with an atef crown.

↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ The supreme god's knowledge is restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– Field doesn't know

- ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god knows your basic character (personal essence):
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god has other knowledge of this world:
  - Yes [specify]: The Deir 'Alla Plaster Text, though probably not Ammonite, suggests El has knowledge of the future. Not necessarily specific to an individual.
- ↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
  - Field doesn't know
  - Notes: In all likelihood, yes, but the data is partial. The Amman Citadel Inscription appears to present Milkom commanding a building project and indicating that he will protect. However, the inscription is damaged and partial, so any conclusions here are drawn from partial data.
- ↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:
  - Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: In all likelihood, yes, but the data is partial. El and/or Milkom appear in personal theophoric names on seals with various attributes of saving, helping, and blessing. Presumably these might be associated with positive emotions.

↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: In all likelihood, yes, but the data is partial. The Amman Citadel Inscription appears to present Milkom commanding a building project and indicating that he will protect. The protection appears to include judgment on those who resist. However, the inscription is damaged and partial, so any conclusions here are drawn from partial data.

↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: A variety of attributes are ascribed to El and/or Milkom on Ammonite seals related to blessing, saving, helping, being exalted, and mighty. For detailed discussion see Cornell 2015.

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life:

– Field doesn't know

↳ In dreams:

– Yes

Notes: As indicated in the Deir 'Alla Plaster Texts

↳ In trance possession:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Through divination practices:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Presumably yes, as a variety of divinatory practices are widely practiced across the ancient Near East. Astragali (sheep and goat knuckle bones often used for divination) are archaeologically attested in Ammon. Whether they were used to get answers from Milkom and/or El is unknown.

↳ Only through religious specialists:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Only through monarch

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Probably not exclusively through the monarch if at all.

↳ Other form of communication with living:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: In all likelihood, yes. Implied by the grave goods that suggest ongoing care of the dead.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Probably, but hard to document.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:

– No

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: A number of mixed human-divine beings are attested on seals found in Ammon. Most of these seals are of the conoid stamp or cylinder types that come from Mesopotamia and so it is not clear that they represent or were understood to represent a locally intelligible supernatural being. A handful of scaraboid stamp seals (a type produced and used in the Levant) do have mixed human-divine beings. These are: 1) Bull-man—Varying somewhat from depiction to depiction, a bull-man has the body of a bull, a human head, and sometimes wings (Black and Green 1992, p. 51). One appears on the scaraboid stamp seal 'Amman 6 (CSAJ, pp. 14–15), and on another scaraboid stamp seal, Tall al-'Umeiri 55 (CSAJ, pp. 342–343). 2) Genius—Genius is a generic name used to cover a number of figures with human heads and bodies with the addition of wings (Black and Green 1992, pp. 87–88). What appears to be a four-winged genius is visible on one side of the scaraboid stamp seal 'Amman 6 (CAI, no. 41; CSAJ, pp. 14–15), but the head area is damaged and hence impossible to know for sure. Another four-winged genius appears on Tall Safut 4 (CSAJ, pp. 436–437).

↳ These mixed human-divine beings can be seen:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These mixed human-divine beings can be physically felt:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Mixed human-divine beings have knowledge of this world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These mixed human-divine beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Field doesn't know

- ↳ These mixed human-divine beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These mixed human-divine beings exhibit positive emotion:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These mixed human-divine beings exhibit negative emotion:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These mixed human-divine beings possess hunger:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These mixed human-divine beings possess/exhibit some other feature:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:
  - Yes
  - ↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:
    - Field doesn't know
  - ↳ Organized hierarchically:
    - Yes
  - ↳ Power of beings is domain specific:
    - Field doesn't know
    - Notes: In all likelihood, yes, domain specific with inevitable overlap.
  - ↳ Other organization for pantheon:
    - Field doesn't know

## Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: The Amman Citadel Inscription (CAI, no. 189) portrays the god Milkom as punishing what seem to be enemies by destroying them. The text is fragmentary, so further details are difficult to tease out.

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– No

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– No

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of political failure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of defeat in battle:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Probably does.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Field doesn't know



Notes: Probably does.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of disaster on journeys:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of mild sensory displeasure:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of extreme sensory displeasure:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:  
– Field doesn't know  
Notes: Probably does.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of impaired reproduction:  
– Field doesn't know  
Notes: Probably does.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck visited on descendants:  
– Field doesn't know  
Notes: Probably does.

↳ Other [specify]  
– No

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:  
– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:  
– Yes

Notes: Inferred from various personal names recorded in inscriptions that indicate some kind of beneficence given to humans. The name "Barakil" (CAI, no. 179), for example, means something like, "Blessing of El."

↳ Supernatural rewards in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Reward in this life consists of good luck:  
– Yes

Notes: See the use of the word "gd," meaning something like "fortune" in personal names: gd'zr, "Gad/fortune has helped" (CAI, no. 147). Two non-provenanced seals also use the word "gd" in names: gdmlk, "Gad/fortune is king" (CAI, no. 8); mlkmgad, "Milkom is fortune" (CAI, no. 127).

↳ Reward in this life consists of political success or power:  
– Field doesn't know  
Notes: Probably does.

↳ Reward in this life consists of success in battle:  
– Field doesn't know  
Notes: Probably does.

↳ Reward in this life consists of peace or social stability:  
– Field doesn't know  
Notes: Seems likely.

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:  
– Yes  
Notes: See the Tall Siran Bottle (CAI, no. 78).

↳ Reward in this life consists of success on journeys:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Reward in this life consists of mild sensory pleasure:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Reward in this life consists of extreme sensory pleasure:  
– Field doesn't know

- ↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:
  - Field doesn't know
  
- ↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success:
  - Field doesn't know
  - Notes: Probably does.
  
- ↳ Reward in this life consists of fortune visited on descendants:
  - Field doesn't know
  - Notes: Seems likely. See CAI, no. 78.
  
- ↳ Other [specify]
  - No

### Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

- Field doesn't know

### Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

- Field doesn't know

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

- Field doesn't know

## Practices

### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

- No

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

- No

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Probably not, but periodic voluntary fasting might be involved.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: No indication that such practices existed.

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: No indication that such practices existed.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– Field doesn't know

Notes: No indication that such practices existed.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The Hebrew Bible appears to conflate the Ammonite god Milkom with a god or type of sacrifice known as molech. This molech was associated with child sacrifice. There appears to be no reason for the conflation other than a mistaken connection between the consonants of molech (m-l-k) and the consonants of Milkom's name (m-l-k-m). See 1 Kings 11: 5 and 7. Cf. Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: No indication that such practice existed.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: No indication that such practices existed.

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Probably some, especially along the lines of honor and shame.

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Probably does not require it, but there is evidence for personal and household religion. See Daviau, P. M. Michèle. 2001. "Family Religion: Evidence for the Paraphernalia of the Domestic Cult." In *The World of the Aramaeans II: Studies in History and Archaeology in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion*, edited by P. M. Michèle Daviau, John W. Wevers and Michael Weigl, In *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series*, 199–229. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Field doesn't know

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– Field doesn't know

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Yes

↳ Fictive kinship terminology universal:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Fictive kinship terminology widespread:

– Yes

Notes: The Tall Siran Bottle Inscription (CAI, no. 78) mentions three successive kings of the Ammonites all designated as *mlk bn 'mn*, "king of the sons of Ammon." The Hebrew Bible characteristically refers to the Ammonites as *bnay 'mn*, "the sons of Ammon," (e.g., Genesis 19:38, Joshua 12:2), and less often as "Ammon" (e.g., 1 Samuel 11:11). In its records of the interactions with its imperial subjects, the Neo-Assyrian Empire refers to the Ammonites as "the house of Ammon," "the sons of Ammon," or simply "Ammon" (Tyson 2019: 20 in "Sources"). Whether Ammon was a real person somewhere in the past is impossible to say. The fact that *'mm* is a kinship word to begin with, meaning something like "kinsman," suggests, however, that the eponymous ancestor is fictive. How widely and readily people in this region considered themselves a part of the "sons of Ammon" is difficult to say. If historical examples be our guide, it seems likely that "sons of Ammon" was the top-level label under which other small clans and tribes coalesced.

↳ Fictive kinship terminology employed but uncommon:

– No

## Society and Institutions

### Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: A tribal kingdom.

### Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: If any, it would most likely be at the town or village level.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Possibly built into the social fabric at the town or village level.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– Field doesn't know

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

## Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– Yes

Notes: Scribes and priests certainly had some type of formal education of which we presently know almost nothing except from parallels in surrounding societies.

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Scribes and priests certainly had some type of formal education of which we presently know almost nothing except from parallels in surrounding societies.



Is extra-religious education open to both males and females:

– Field doesn't know

## Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Yes

Notes: Several bits of evidence outline the existence of a small cadre of officials that served in different capacities. The clearest examples are seals that use the title 'ebed, "servant." Two provenanced seals include this title: 1) l'dnnr. ' /bd 'mndb – "(Belonging) to 'Adōnīnūr servant of 'Ammīnadab" (CAI, no. 40); 2) lmlkm'wr /'b/d b'lyš' – "(Belonging) to Milkōm'awr servant of Ba'lyašū'" (CAI, no. 129). Two non-provenanced seals include the same title (CAI, nos. 13, 17). One provenanced seal documents a herald:

lplṭy bn / m'š hm/zkr – "(Belonging) to Palṭay son of Ma'īš the herald" (CAI, no. 124a). Several non-provenanced seals include other titles. Given that they are from private collections and/or purchased on the antiquities market, it is difficult to establish their reliability. The non-provenanced seals include the following titles: hnss, "the standard bearer" (CAI, no. 68), n' r, "young man," "steward" (CAI, nos. 53, 54), and (h)spr, "(the) scribe" (CAI, nos. 139, 209). Thus, the seals provide limited evidence for people with specialized skills or positions, some of whom may have served the king, while others may have been attached to wealthy individuals. A handful of ostraca (ink on pottery documents, generally receipts and lists) provide late (around 600 BCE) and limited data for an Ammonite bureaucracy (CAI, nos. 65, 76, 80, 94, 137, 144-147, 211, 238, 243). They demonstrate an interest in keeping track of disbursements, and highlight the relatively consistent use and development of script. The use of a standard script is one of the strongest indications that there was a system (however small) of scribal education.

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

Notes: Though the evidence is rather limited, some interaction with external bureaucracies is hinted at in the biblical text Amos 1:15, which mentions an Ammonite king and "his officials" (šārāyw). This implies that the biblical author understood that there was some identifiable group of people attached to the Ammonite king. A small group of Neo-Assyrian texts that mention an Ammonite king, and in one case some men who were with him document interaction between the small tribal kingdom of Ammon with Neo-Assyrian officials. See pp. 72-79 in Tyson, Craig W. 2014. *The Ammonites: Elites, Empires, and Sociopolitical Change (1000-500 BCE)*. Edited by Claudia V. Camp and Andrew Mein. Vol. 585. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark.

## Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: There is, to date, no evidence of large-scale public food storage.

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– No

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: A large reservoir (extant measurements approximately 20.0 x 30.0 m and 3.0 m deep) has been partially excavated at Tall Jalul. It is said to have been constructed in the 9th century BCE and reused in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. A long water channel was also built at Tall Jalul in the 7th century, though its relation to the reservoir remains enigmatic. On these features see the Tall Jalul



preliminary reports (Gregor and Gregor 2010; Gregor et al. 2011, 2012, 2017, 2018). A reservoir was also located at Tall Hisban filled with material from the Iron IIC down to the Hellenistic period. The reservoir itself was probably constructed earlier. A large and enigmatic underground chamber located at the north end of the Amman Citadel might possibly have been used for water, but the evidence is scant. On the reservoir at Tall Jalul see: 1) Gregor, Paul, and Helena Gregor. 2010. "Preliminary Report Tall Jalul 2009 and 2010 Seasons: Field G and W." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 54: 493–498. 2) Gregor, Paul, Paul J. Ray, Jr., Randall W. Younker, and Constance E. Gane. 2011. "Preliminary Report on the 2011 Season of the Madaba Plains Project: Tall Jalul Excavations 2011." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 55: 351–362. 3) Gregor, Paul Z., Robert Bates, Paul J. Ray, Jr., Constance E. Gane, and Randall W. Younker. 2018. "Preliminary Report on the 2016 Season of the Madaba Plains Project: Tall Jalul Excavations 2016." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 59: 399–410. 4) Gregor, Paul Z., Constance E. Gane, Helena Gregor, Randall W. Younker, and Paul J. Ray, Jr. 2017. "Preliminary Report on the 2014 and 2015 Seasons of the Madaba Plains Project: Tall Jalul Excavations 2014 and 2015." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 58: 691–695. 5) Gregor, Paul Z., Randall W. Younker, and Paul J. Ray, Jr. 2012. "Preliminary Report on the 2012 Season of the Madaba Plains Project: Tall Jalul Excavations 2012." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 56: 201–205. On the reservoir at Tall Hisban see pp. 75–79 and 138–149 in Ray, Paul J., Jr. 2001. *Tell Hesban and Vicinity in the Iron Age*. Edited by L. T. Geraty and Ø. S. LaBianca. Vol. 6. *Hesban*. Berreïn Springs, MI: Andrews University Press. On the underground chamber at the Amman Citadel see pp. 89–90 in Dornemann, Rudolph H. 1983. *The Archaeology of the Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages*. Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum.

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It is likely that the Ammonites managed long-distance traffic moving through the region.

## Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Field doesn't know

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: During the Neo-Assyrian period (ca. 734–612 BCE) the Ammonites were clients/vassals to the Assyrian empire as were many other polities in the Levant. Not surprisingly, part of the relationship revolved around payment of tribute on a regular basis (Tyson 2014: 71–79). This situation likely continued into the following Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods (ca. 612–400 BCE), though the extant evidence is scanty. Whether the Ammonite king levied taxes or a corvée on his own subjects is difficult to say based on the extant evidence from Ammon. Some form of taxation, whether in-kind or otherwise does seem likely though given evidence from elsewhere in the Levant. The small collection of ostraca from Ammon are largely name lists, distribution lists, or receipts, some of which might

potentially record tax receipts (Tyson 2014: 85–91). Tyson, Craig W. 2014. *The Ammonites: Elites, Empires, and Sociopolitical Change (1000–500 BCE)*. Edited by Claudia V. Camp and Andrew Mein. Vol. 585 *Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies*. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark.

## Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Possibly, in some extenuated manner, they might have been subject to the judicial systems of the various empires that held sway over the area.

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: To some extent the polity as a whole, and the king in particular, were subject to imperial legal practices surrounding clientage/vassalage. These relationship were often formalized in writing, though it is difficult to say that there is a legal code somehow used to enforce them.

## Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: It is not known whether the Ammonites had a standing army. Their involvement in the Battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE (Yamada 2000: 159-161) indicates that they could at least muster a force when necessary. In 667, during the reign of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal, the Ammonites contributed an unknown number of troops to the Assyrian campaign against Egypt (Novotny and Jeffers 2018: 116-117, column ii, lines 25'-55'). Novotny, Jamie, and Joshua Jeffers. 2018. The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668-631 BC), Aššur-etel-ilāni (630-627 BC), and Sîn-šarra-iškun (626-612 BC), Kings of Assyria, Part 1. Vol. 5/1The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns. Yamada, Shigeo. 2000. The Construction of the Assyrian Empire: A Historical Study of the Inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.) Relating to His Campaigns to the West. Edited by B. Halpern, M. H. E. Weippert, Th. P. J. van den Hout and I. Winter. Vol. 3Culture and History of the Ancient Near East. Leiden: Brill.

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: They were subject to the Neo-Assyrian military during their clientage/vassalage (ca. 734-612 BCE).

## Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– Yes

Notes: This is difficult to answer since the religious group and the political group are essentially the same. Nevertheless, the Ammonites do use a distinct form of the Aramaic script.

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

## Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Field doesn't know

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

## Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Gathering

– Hunting (including marine animals)

– Pastoralism

– Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: Some fish bones, such as those from the Nile Perch, have been found in excavations, suggesting that there was some exchange of specialized foods from outside the area.

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

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